

*8 April 2006*  
*Saturday*

## READINGS

Psalm 137; Exodus 10:21-11:8; II Corinthians 4:13-18; Mark 10:46-52

## DEVOTION

“Therefore we do not give up; even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day. For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen; for what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” (II Corinthians 4:16-18)

As the sun descended beyond the monstrous landscape of mountains and trees, I wondered for the thousandth time that day and the millionth time that month, “What in the world could I possibly have been thinking? Who would intentionally do this to themselves?”

The 23rd day of my 30-day Alpine Mountaineering Outward Bound Course was, and still is, undoubtedly the most grueling and trying day of my life so far. After 22 days of navigating our every move, literally living out of the 60-pound packs we carried on our backs, and battling the unpredictable climate of Colorado’s San Juan mountain range, we all thought day 23 would come and go with ease. I’m not sure if it was hour 15, when we discovered we had hiked in the wrong direction for 5 hours, or hour 24, when we calculated that we still had 7 hours of hiking to reach our destination, that we realized how naively wrong we were.

I remember looking around at my seven battered course mates, each probably in the worst physical pain of their lives. A marmot had chewed the shoulder strap of Max’s pack, so the makeshift rope strap had been cutting into his arms for days. John had an unbelievable blister on his foot, and little did I know I had been hiking on a torn MCL for 15 days.

The moon barely lit a path for the last 10 hours of our hike and, as unsafe and crazy as it may sound now, we all decided to close our eyes and walk by the sound of the stream to our left. We kept saying to each other that we were, “just resting our eyes for a few minutes.” It’s a miracle nobody fell in the stream or off the side of the mountain.

Huge chunks of my blind trek are lost to my memories. I thought for a while that I may have actually fallen asleep while walking and my body somehow just kept moving forward.

We made it through that day, and the ones that followed, and as I marveled at the luxuries of chair backs and pretzels during my flight back to North Carolina, I thought about my instructor’s parting comments. He said, “Once you reenter civilization, one single moment from the last 30 days of experiences will probably burn brighter than others.”

My moment came on that 23rd night when I closed my eyes and realized that though my outer person was destroyed my inner person was being renewed. I was not focusing on what was seen, it was only temporary, for the unseen strength that pulled me through that night birthed an unquestionable faith, which now seems to reveal itself in every part of my daily life.

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